

APR 28 1961

MITCHELL, S.D.
REPUBLIC

EVENING 17,853

APR 28 1961

Editorials—**Probing The CIA**

While President Kennedy on two specific occasions declared that he alone assumes responsibility for whatever part the United States played in the ill-fated invasion of Castro's Cuba, the Central Intelligence Agency is getting the blame.

The role of the CIA was, as TV news commentator Charles Collingwood charged, "an open secret for months." Specifically, Collingwood points out that the agency's part in the rental of land in Guatemala for training rebels had been turned up in October by Prof. Ronald Hilton, of Stanford University, and published in an obscure learned journal.

The Nation magazine took up the story in November, and there have been occasional references in *Time*. Perhaps the initial daily press account was a front-page story in the N.Y. Times Jan 10, which detailed some of the activity at the mysterious Retalhuleu air base in Guatemala but did not name the CIA. Except for subsequent occasional coverage by that newspaper, the story was generally ignored by the press until after the abortive landings in Cuba.

The difficulty of a democratic government's conducting clandestine operations is pointed up in the CIA-Cuba story. President John F. Kennedy is reported to have remarked wryly at a National Security Council meeting on April 22 that there was "no New York Times" to print the news of what the Communists were doing in Laos and Viet Nam.

The role of the press is of course dual: it has a responsibility to keep the public informed of grave matters and it has a responsibility to preserve national security. However, as Collingwood points out, the CIA-Cuba story has been "in the public domain" since publication of Prof. Hilton's story. ((Collingwood blithely ignores the consideration, incidentally, that if the press neglected the story, so did television and radio.)

The CIA activity was of long duration. Indeed, *The Nation* flatly states: "The (Cuban) cloak-and-dagger operation of the CIA was initiated as early as 1953." *Time* estimates the cost to have ranged "from \$135,000 monthly to as high as \$500,000 on occasions."

The study of U.S. para-military activities ordered by President Kennedy April 22 is to be government-wide, but obviously it will bear down on the CIA role in support of the anti-Castro forces. It may well have the effect of forestalling the proposal made by Sen. Mike Mansfield (D-Mont.) five years ago and renewed after the U-2 incident of last year that a permanent joint committee be established to make continuing studies of the agency.

Congress has every right to investigate CIA. Congress established the agency in 1947; Congress votes its funds (though only a few members know what they're voting for); Congress in 1949 greatly extended CIA'S authority.

But the CIA Act of 1949 specifically exempts the cloak-and-dagger agency from the provisions of any law requiring publication or disclosure of the "organization, functions, names, official titles, salaries, or numbers of personnel employees." This kind of freedom from public scrutiny has given CIA both its strength and its occasional weaknesses. In this respect the special study group ordered by the President, on balance, would seem to be better able to investigate the agency without airing its secrets than a Congressional committee would be.